

Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held remotely on 12 November 2020 at 2.30 pm.

Present:

Councillor James MacCleary (Chair).

Councillors Zoe Nicholson (Vice-Chair), Matthew Bird, Julie Carr, Chris Collier, Johnny Denis, William Meyer, Emily O'Brien and Ruth O'Keeffe.

Officers in attendance:

Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive), Homira Javadi (Chief Finance Officer), Ian Fitzpatrick (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning), Tim Whelan (Director of Service Delivery), Becky Cooke (Assistant Director for Human Resources and Transformation), Oliver Dixon (Head of Legal Services), Jo Harper (Head of Business Planning and Performance), Matt Hitchen (Senior Planning Policy Officer) and Simon Russell (Head of Democratic Services).

Also in attendance:

Councillor Isabelle Lington (Leader of the Opposition), Councillor Imogen Makepeace, Councillor Joe Miller (Chair of Policy and Performance Advisory Committee) and Councillor Julian Peterson (Chair of Audit and Standards Committee).

13 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2020 were submitted and approved and the Chair was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

14 Apologies for absence

None were reported.

15 Declarations of interest

None were declared.

16 Support for a Universal Basic Income pilot in Lewes District

The Cabinet considered the request from Councillor Makepeace in relation to asking the government to launch a pilot of Universal Basic Income (UBI) in the district. UBI is a payment to cover the basic cost of living and is given to all citizens regardless of employment status, wealth or marital status and is not means-tested.

Councillor Makepeace addressed and presented the item to Cabinet.

Cabinet unanimously supported the request and conveyed their thanks to Councillor Makepeace for submitting the item.

Visiting members, Councillors Miller, Linington and Peterson addressed the Cabinet on this item and raised concerns on the concept of UBI.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

(1) To establish a forum for councillors and local partners and stakeholder groups, and with local partners to raise awareness and understanding of UBI.

(2) That the Leader of the Council on behalf of the Council and our residents, write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the leader of the party in Government, their counterparts in all opposition political parties in parliament to articulate the following:

- The current benefit system is failing citizens, with Universal Credit causing hardship to many in Lewes District
- There is a danger of increasing numbers of people facing poverty as a result of the coronavirus crisis;
- Trialling a UBI is needed, as a UBI has the potential to help address key challenges such as inequality, poverty, precarious employment, loss of community, and breach of planetary boundaries through:
 - (i) Giving employers a more flexible workforce whilst giving employees greater freedom to change their jobs;
 - ii) Valuing unpaid work, such as caring for family members and voluntary work;
 - iii) Removing the negative impacts of benefit sanctions and conditionality;
 - iv) Giving people more equal resources within the family, workplace and society;
 - v) Breaking the link between work and consumption, thus helping reduce strain on the environment;
 - vi) Enabling greater opportunities for people to work in community and cultural activities or to train or re-skill in areas that will be needed to transition to a lower carbon economy.
- The success of a UBI pilot should be measured by health and well-being and community benefit alongside economic and employment impacts;

- Lewes District is ideally placed to pilot a UBI, given its economic and geographic diversity.

Reason for decision:

As set out in report.

17 Recovery and reset programme

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive, updating them on the progress of the Recovery and Reset programme and wider District recovery.

The programme was a key element of tackling the budget shortfall of around £12 million over the next four years and supporting the community. Given the significant level of organisational change to deliver services, the requested allocation of £250,000 to the capital programme would enable the Council to invest in IT systems and extra resources that were needed for early stages of delivery.

The Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, at its meeting on 3 November 2020, made the following recommendations to Cabinet:

To support the recommendations in the report subject to consideration by the Cabinet of the following amendments:

- (1) That the Cabinet considers supporting local people in financial distress with a focus on schemes such as council tax relief;**
- (2) That the Cabinet support a campaign to allow pubs to make off-sales of alcohol in sealed containers for consumption at home during lockdown; and**
- (3) That the Cabinet approval of the requested allocation of £250,000 to the Capital Programme is made subject to the approval of the Recovery and Reset Board.**

The recommendations from the Policy and Performance Advisory Committee (PPAC), were presented by Councillor Joe Miller, Chair of PPAC and considered by Cabinet during their discussions.

Visiting member and Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Linington addressed the Cabinet on this item. In reference to the recommendations from PPAC, it was clarified that since the meeting on 3 November 2020, the government had announced that pubs would be allowed to make off-sales of alcohol in sealed containers for consumption at home during lockdown. Councillor Linington also made a reference to PPAC's third recommendation and sought further details on what the £250,000 would be spent on.

In addressing PPAC's first recommendation, Councillor Nicholson expressed a wish to explore ways of supporting local people in financial distress, looking at a public consultation, with a view to revising the council tax reduction scheme in future years. A formal paper on the council tax reduction scheme would be considered by Cabinet at its December meeting.

The Cabinet unanimously agreed to make additional resolutions, incorporating PPAC's first and second recommendations. A revision to Cabinet's second resolution was made, in an attempt to match the intention of PPAC's third recommendation and also to accord with the Council's constitution. This was detailed in full below. Following discussions, Councillor Miller withdrew PPAC's third recommendation.

Resolved (Key decision):

- (1) To note the progress made with the Recovery and Reset Programme.
- (2) To approve an allocation of £250k to be added to the capital programme to ensure immediate start of the Council's Recovery & Reset work, with detailed advice from the cross party Recovery and Reset Board.
- (3) To explore supporting local people in financial distress with a focus on schemes such as council tax relief.
- (4) To support a campaign to allow pubs to make off-sales of alcohol in sealed containers for consumption at home during lockdown.

Reason for decisions:

The Recovery and Reset Programme provides a structured and accountable approach for delivering the level of significant organisational change needed to respond to current and future challenges.

18 Responses to Government consultation on reforms to the planning system

The Cabinet considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning regarding the Council's submitted responses to the consultations on the Government's 'Planning for the future' White Paper and 'Changes to the current planning system' proposals for reforming the planning system.

The report detailed the authority's response, raising strong concerns and objections to the government proposals, that would see the housing requirement for Lewes district nearly double, from 483 to 800 properties a year and potentially lead to 37% fewer affordable homes.

Cabinet expressed their thanks to Matthew Hitchen, Senior Planning Policy Officer and his team for their work in helping members understand the proposals.

Visiting member and Chair of Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, Councillor Miller addressed the Cabinet on this item, welcoming the general principle behind the white paper.

Resolved (Non-key decision):

To note the responses submitted to the Government's consultations on reforms to the planning system.

Reason for decision:

To update Cabinet on the responses submitted to the Government's consultations on reforms to the planning system

The meeting ended at 3.55 pm

Councillor James MacCleary (Chair)